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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

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Addendum

IV. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

B. Consideration of reports

5. Third periodic reports

Hungary

1. The Committee considered the third periodic report of Hungary (CEDAW/C/HUN/3 and Add.1) at its 304th and 305th meetings, on 30 January 1996 (see CEDAW/C/SR.304 and 305).

2. In his introductory statement, the representative of Hungary stressed the importance and high priority attached by his Government to the Convention, to the achievement of equality of women and men,and the integration of women's human rights into the mainstream of human rights activities. Human rights education at all levels was considered to be the appropriate tool to promote the elimination of discrimination.

3. The transition to a new political system, resulting from democratic elections in 1990, opened up new opportunities for civil society. At the same time, the transition from State socialism to democracy had unwanted consequences

regarding women's role and position in society. The concepts of parity, democracy and of equal rights of men and women, while enshrined in the Constitution and in legislation, are not yet a reality. While women participate in local politics, their representation at the national level remains low, and women's organizations are not strong or representative enough to influence government policy on equality issues.

4. A difficult economic situation, falling living standards and economic stabilization measures restrict the possibilities for implementing the Convention, in particular with regard to women's de facto equality. While there is a dramatic increase in unemployment, so far it affects men more than women. However, the situation of elderly women is very precarious, and young women are disadvantaged in the labour market, owing to their lower level of skills and qualifications. The labour market remains segregated. A rise in prostitution is also attributed to high unemployment and other economic hardships.

5. Recent changes introduced in the country included the modification of the family support system, according to which most financial support to families will now be needs-based. Financial child-care benefits are being abolished, and the number of State-sponsored day-care facilities has decreased. The cost of private child care often exceeds the financial means of Hungarian families. Efforts are under way to educate female employees about their rights in the workplace, which is considered very important in a time of drastic economic change. A women's machinery was established within the framework of the Ministry of Labour.

6. The situation of the minority Roma, many of whom live in extreme poverty, is of particular concern to the Government. A programme of action is therefore being elaborated to address educational, employment, social welfare and anti-discrimination aspects.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

7. The Committee expressed its satisfaction with the manner in which the State party had submitted its third periodic report and engaged in a constructive dialogue with the Committee.

8. The report describes the major changes which have occurred in the country and the serious difficulties confronting women's rights and their effective recognition.

9. The Committee is aware that Hungary is undergoing a period of social and political transition whose economic consequences are not conducive to advancing the status of women.

10. The Committee noted that the report and the oral presentation provided an objective analysis of the situation.

Factors obstructing implementation of the Convention

11. The economic recession, the emergence of neoconservative and neoliberal ideas and the change in attitudes towards the traditional family, with a system of values where the mother is the central element of the household, have had a substantial negative impact on the country's overall situation, creating a feeling of heightened insecurity.

12. Women's issues are consequently no longer a matter of primary concern for the country. The Committee is aware that this transition period is delaying implementation of the Convention and compliance with the commitments made by the State party at the Fourth World Conference.

Positive aspects

13. The Committee notes with satisfaction that Hungary's Constitution and legislation guarantee equal rights to women without any discrimination.

14. The Committee particularly appreciates the legislative and structural reforms recently introduced by the Government to guarantee women's social and political rights, including the Embryo Protection Act, which has considerably reduced the number of induced abortions.

15. The Committee is pleased with the inclusion of human rights teaching, including women's rights as an integral part thereof, in the curricula of primary and secondary schools and at universities.

16. The Committee applauds the cooperation being developed by Hungary with international institutions such as the European Union and the International Labour Organization (ILO) for the further training of human resources, thereby, inter alia, providing women with opportunities to improve their situation.

17. The Committee notes with interest a resurgence of women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are extending links of solidarity with each other, with a view to making women aware of their rights.

18. The Committee notes with satisfaction the emergence of a class of businesswomen in Hungary, which can help to stimulate the country's economy.

Negative aspects

19. The Committee is concerned that there is no coherent policy or any powerful body with special responsibility for coordinating action in favour of women.

20. Since their specific needs are not being taken into account, de facto recognition of women's rights is undeniably meeting obstacles.

21. The Committee expresses concern about the low level of female representation in the decision-making process and in the conduct of public affairs.

22. The Committee notes with alarm that the number of acts of violence and sex crimes against women more than doubled between 1980 and 1993, and consequently deplores the lack of special criminal legislation designed to curb these crimes.

23. The Committee notes with regret that the economic constraints resulting from the transition process are having a particular impact on women's employment and health; female unemployment is increasing and the quality of social services provided to women is deteriorating.

24. In addition, the state of health of the female population is unsatisfactory when judged by international standards. In particular, the high cost of contraceptives prevents women from freely planning when to have children.

25. The Committee notes with concern the scale of the problem of prostitution which affects girls and ethnic minorities in particular.

26. The Committee also notes the very precarious situation of refugee women who are more exposed to discriminatory treatment.

27. The Committee regrets that women's issues are not a priority for the government, political parties or public opinion.

28. The Committee notes with concern the increased emphasis placed on women's role as mothers to the detriment of their role as citizens.

Suggestions and recommendations

29. The Committee recommends that the State party should ensure that the provisions of the Convention are implemented and that the commitments it made at the Fourth World Conference on Women are honoured, by instituting a high-level national mechanism responsible for defining and coordinating a policy for the advancement of women.

30. The Committee invites the Government to take the necessary measures to improve the level of representation of women in all areas of political and public life.

31. The Committee requests the Government to take urgent legislative and structural measures to provide female victims of violence with protection and appropriate and suitable services.

32. The Committee requests the Government to offer sex education programmes to all young people and to subsidize contraceptives in order to promote family planning and reduce the number of abortions.

33. The Committee urgently requests the Government to take all necessary measures to reinsert prostitutes into society.

34. The Committee urges the Government to guarantee social protection for minorities and refugees.

35. The Committee recommends that the Government should support non-governmental organizations and establish a network with a view to strengthening their actions.

36. The Committee urgently requests the Government to take further steps to disseminate the Convention and the general recommendations of the Committee.